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## THE REMEDY FOR MEXICO

BY LESLIE C. WELLS,

Professor of French and Spanish, Clark College, Worcester, Mass.

What should be desired in Mexico is not so much immediate peace as a peace that shall be tolerably permanent. Mexico is a land of special privilege and great oppression of the masses. That is one of the two causes of the country's present troubles. The other, complementary to it, is the twofold fact, first, that there is a deep-seated desire among the people for a change in their condition, and second, that large numbers of the more virile part of the population are at last determined to force the change. These two causes must be taken as the fundamental considerations for foreign governments in the formation of a far-sighted policy with regard to the Mexican situation.

For a permanent cure of disease, the cause must be removed. There will not be settled peace in Mexico, and there ought not to be, until the people see the promise of a reasonable degree of relief from their sad condition. This can be realized only through the ascendancy of some party pledged to reforms. It is idle to think that a strong man is the main essential. True it is that the man at the helm in Mexico should be one of extraordinary strength, but the movement of the times is greater than any individual; and unless he fall into step with the demands of the generation, no man's personality can long dominate the situation. There was never any substantial reason for thinking that General Huerta, with only his military prestige to recommend him, could prove the salvation of his country. Granting that the recognition of his government a year ago by the United States would have resulted in peace, which is to be doubted, the peace would have been a forced one, maintained by the arbitrary methods of the old régime. Such a peace would have been fatal to itself, the peace that Porfirio Diaz maintained, and at best could have been but a temporary one. It probably would have resulted in a few years in an explosion all the more violent because of the repression.

Not only must there come to power in Mexico a party committed to reforms, but, if settled peace is to result, its victory must come about under such circumstances as to enable it to carry some of the reforms,

where they are most urgent, into immediate execution. This means that their victory must be complete, and not one of compromise. The sad example furnished by the compromise of Madero should be a warning against another, not only to the Mexicans of the reform element, but also to foreign governments which may be inclined to exert pressure upon the contending parties to compose their differences. No steps should be taken which would leave in positions of power men in sympathy with the old régime who might work to undermine the strength of the victors or to delay or neutralize the realization of their purposes. Any such abortion on the part of the revolution would logically result in another popular revolution against the new government, as there were uprisings against Madero when it appeared that he would not bring to satisfactory fruition the aims with which he inspired the soldiers who fought his battles. The leaders of the revolution are but the instruments of the people, in whose hearts it has its real and vital force. If these instruments fail the people in the ultimate work that is to be done after the smoke of battle has cleared away, they will be cast aside for some of truer or stronger steel. It is therefore devoutly to be desired that the leaders of reform should have a clear field for their efforts. This will not be possible unless the Científico party and others whom President Diaz favored are so completely defeated and shorn of their strength as to be discouraged for some time to come from attempting to block the progress of the age. These considerations not only justify the Mexican revolutionists in declining mediation, but should deter foreign governments from pressing it.

It may be too early to predict that the present Constitutionalist organization will win a victory so complete, or that the struggle can be ended soon enough to satisfy foreigners, except those who can possess themselves with great patience. But, on some accounts, it is desirable that the Constitutionalists, if they are to conquer Huerta, or any other reactionary to whom he may give place, should make somewhat slow progress in their march to Mexico City. As battles deplete their ranks, to restore them to their necessary numbers they will have to depend to some extent upon accessions of inexperienced soldiers in the country through which they pass. If no time is taken to train and discipline these men, not only will the war be bloodier, but the armies will in moments of stress and temptation be more irresponsible, and possibly the cause of much unnecessary loss

of property and suffering to non-combatants. Moreover, as the Constitutionalist government extends its control to the south, it needs time to organize itself in the new territory, to get its machinery into well coördinated operation, to restore a tranquil and confident state of mind among the people, such as apparently exists in the sections where it has been longest in control, and to bring the daily activities of the people as nearly as may be back to their accustomed flow. If its armies should now capture city after city in rapid succession, and arrive in a rush at the capital itself, the excitement of the populace, as well as that of the soldiers, would run so high that many grave events might take place. In some places the lower classes might take into their own hands the work of reform at which the revolution is aiming, interpret their regained rights in their own crude way, and in seizing upon them commit many acts of vengeance and violence. The fall of Mexico City, if coming as the result of a battle at that point, will at any time be the occasion of great excitement through the entire country. No better provision can be had against the untoward contingencies of that event than the slow but sure consolidation of the power of the Constitutionalist government.

Assuming that after a final victory of the Constitutionalists the civil government of the country will temporarily be in the hands of General Carranza and his cabinet, the peace of the nation will be much better assured in the trying period that will follow, if they have had time in different localities to become acquainted with the conditions and problems that will confront them. They might well go further than this. They might get some of those problems partially off their hands by bringing to them local and provisional solutions. For the masses of the people, probably the most tangible of the many abuses which they are fighting is that of the land tenure. It is the one whose abolition they will demand with the greatest promptness after the war is over. Any delay in this reform will be as perilous for the peace of the country as it proved to be in the time of Madero. In some of the places where land is most sorely needed for individual or communal use, it might be wise for the Constitutionalist government, on the several stages of its southward progress, to seize land and confer it upon villages or divide it among families. This might be done by confiscation in cases where circumstances justify it, and by expropriation, with the remuneration subject to later decisions of the courts,

in places where invalidity of title is not apparent and no other grounds exist for confiscation.

To do this wisely would take some time; but such a procedure would serve to appease the people pending the institution of further reforms, and render more secure the new government to be established in Mexico City. Such a policy as this, moreover, adopted as a military or revolutionary measure, would probably in the long run save time. It would give the government experience in handling the question, contact with its varied aspects in the different regions, and a slight opportunity to test different methods of settling it. Successful solutions of the problem in a few localities would pave the way to its general solution by legislative process, in which it would otherwise probably become subject to the same delay of endless debate as during the administration of Madero.

However, impatience outside of Mexico for an early end to the fighting tends to foster a demand for intervention on the part of the United States. This will generally be recognized as unwarranted unless it can be clearly shown that Mexico has forfeited the sovereign right to settle her affairs according to her own ideas, and in the way that is most likely to settle them permanently. A condition of unbearable anarchy would perhaps constitute such forfeiture if there should be no promise of a cessation through the operation of internal forces. By a state of civil war the right is not forfeited, as by the principles of international law a sovereign state may engage in civil war without interference, unless it is waged with unrestrained irresponsibility. That there is some anarchy in Mexico is undoubted. But the important question is whether this anarchy is not the incidental feature, and civil war the predominant fact, of the situation.

It is sometimes difficult to know whether a domestic strife is to be considered a true civil war or a mere contest of personal ambitions. If, however, grounds for controversy exist such as justify an appeal to arms, no foreign government may properly presume to pass judgment on the motives of the leaders of a revolt, and assume that they are making only an insincere and selfish parade of their issues, unless their conduct of the war is such as to show them almost beyond doubt to be without principles of patriotism. Since a man's fellow citizens may be supposed to be better judges of his character than persons of a different nationality, this principle applies with particular force to a struggle where large numbers of men are assembling under the same

leaders, and proving their confidence in them by entrusting their cause to their direction and their lives to their command.

Mexico undeniably presents the basic conditions without which a struggle should not be viewed as a true civil war, namely, the existence of issues which are of vital concern to the people; and the abuses which give rise to them have been so tyrannical as to justify a revolution in the government, and, if necessary to that end, a violent purging of the nation. The revolt on these issues is under the guidance of leaders, civil and military, representing nearly all grades of society and many walks of life. They include men of character who typify the most substantial products of Mexican civilization. The Mexicans, who have proved their confidence in them by enlisting under their standard, are so strong in numbers and in spirit as to be a most formidable force against the best armies that General Huerta can send to oppose them. A large part of these troops certainly, and apparently almost all of them, are operating under orders from a single source. Their chief is also exercising the powers of civil government in a very extensive and growing territory. In a large part of this territory, notably in the State of Sonora, in which was located until recently the Constitutionalist capital, foreigners have been receiving complete protection. These conditions seem to establish civil war, and not anarchy, as the predominant fact of the situation.

As for the way in which the war is being waged, comparisons should be made with other conflicts. In the history of the United States, not alone the terrible events of Sherman's "March to the Sea," and those in Arkansas, Missouri and Tennessee during the Civil War, but, in more recent times, many predatory and licentious acts of American soldiers<sup>1</sup> in the war with Spain, despite the efforts of the officers to prevent them, rise up to modify the judgment that might be passed on barbarities that have taken place in Mexico. The war ideals of the nation which may prove the most troublesome of the powers that may attempt to force the hand of the United States in Mexico or influence its action there, may be found in the speech made by the German Emperor<sup>2</sup> in 1900 to his troops embarking for China, in which he enjoins them to emulate the Huns of Attila; while the zeal with which they obeyed his injunction, and the excesses of the

<sup>1</sup> E. J. Benton, *International Law and Diplomacy of the Spanish-American War*, p. 162.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Francis Adams, *Studies Military and Diplomatic*, p. 288.

French, British and Russian soldiers<sup>3</sup> on the same expedition, show that the so-called civilized usages of war are largely a fiction.

How, then, can we expect a nation, the masses of whose population are still in an early stage of their development, to carry on a war that shall fall short of Sherman's definition? Can we expect her to be relatively more refined in warfare than she is in the pursuits of peace? If foreigners are satisfied to live in Mexico in times of peace, for the sake of reaping great profits from her backwardness in exploiting her own resources, and to profit also in many cases from Porfirian methods of preserving peace perhaps quite as barbarous as any of the acts of the present conflict, should they not accept their lot uncomplainingly when Mexico engages in warfare? And, everything considered, have not the warring Mexicans acquitted themselves quite as creditably as, in their own wars, have the soldiers of the five nations whose citizens are now most interested on her soil?

Among the cogent reasons of other sorts why the United States should not intervene, there are some of which little has been said in public discussion. Mention may be made of a few, beginning with those which apply to continued control of the Mexican government.

Americans have more than they can attend to to keep their own house in order. The full attention of their legislators and public opinion is needed on the many great domestic problems of city, state and nation. It is especially pertinent to remember that the American people do not need to cross their frontiers to find alien wards to guide, and aliens who bid fair to bring more sorrow to them than can ever come from the Mexicans if the latter are left to themselves. Recent articles<sup>4</sup> by Prof. E. A. Ross, in which he deals with the economic, political and social effects of recent immigration, offer on this point much food for thought. If America is to wield her highest influence in the progress of the world, she may well apply her energy developing her own civilization to its best within its natural boundaries, instead of spreading it like a thin veneer over a large part of the earth's surface.

An accumulation of foreign dependencies would in time invite great corruption in our public service.

<sup>3</sup> A. J. Brown, *New Forces in Old China*, chap. xxvi; Wm. Elliot Griffis, *China's Story*, pp. 272-3.

<sup>4</sup> See *The Century* for November and December, 1913, and January, 1914.

Though almost nothing is said of it in the journals of the United States, one learns in talking with Mexicans concerned in the present struggle that there are in the air the germs of contention in matters involving the Mexican priesthood. The revival in politics about two years ago of the defunct Clerical party is an ominous indication of this. It is somewhat difficult to get definite information on the form which the matter is likely to take, but enough is apparent to indicate that whoever is charged with the government of Mexico during the next decade may expect to become involved in some serious church controversies. The people of the United States, especially in view of the possibility of a similar development in the Philippines, if they have due regard for their domestic harmony, will strongly prefer to avoid the embarrassments of such controversies.

The problems of Mexico resulting from her past unfortunate history should be solved by Mexicans, who understand them and understand themselves; not by Anglo-Saxons, whose very blood makes it difficult for them to understand the racial needs of Latin Americans. Mexico's problems are exceedingly complex. One of the most difficult, the agrarian problem, is one with which Americans have had practically no experience in their present foreign possessions. It did not present itself in Cuba or Porto Rico, and exists in the Philippines in a very different form from the Mexican problem. Land in the Philippines, for the most part, is divided into very small holdings, and the problem of the Friar Lands was of a special and peculiar kind. The manner in which it was settled, however, though it may have been the best one for that particular case, which is open to question, is perhaps an indication that the American manner of attacking the Mexican land problem would be inadequate and unjust. Undoubtedly much land in Mexico which appears to be legally held is morally open to confiscation. The Anglo-Saxon respect for technical property rights and horror of confiscatory methods are so great that American administrators, in obtaining land for the use of the peon, would probably saddle upon the country an unnecessary and unjust burden. It is safe to say that Mexico's land problem can be solved properly only by an internal revolution.

The chances are great that it would take the United States longer to bring even a temporary peace to Mexico than it will for the Constitutionalist forces.

The above reasons, except the last, apply especially to interven-



tion for indefinite occupation. To them should be added one which applies to intervention with the purpose of remaining only until peaceful elections can be held, and, like the objection based on the agrarian situation, to joint intervention as well as to action by the United States alone. Considering the pride and suspicion of the Mexican people, it is almost inconceivable that in an election presided over by foreigners or in the slightest degree under their supervision, the Mexican electorate would come to the polls in sufficient numbers to make the election representative of the will of the people. The result would probably be the choice of a president and congress who, even if not susceptible to the influence of scheming foreigners of the nationalities represented in the intervention, would lack the confidence of the nation. The logical thing to expect, after the withdrawal of the intervening powers, would be a new revolution.

The United States more than any other country has an interest in Mexico's ultimate arrival at a peace established on solid foundations of social justice, and in her advance as a self-respecting nation. In this are involved its commercial and political relations not only with Mexico, but with all Latin America as well. It may properly claim the right to judge, free from pressure from European nations, what policy will be most conducive to such a development, and to decide that there shall be intervention neither by itself nor by any other power. The writer believes that a new basis should be found for the Monroe Doctrine in an understanding with the other countries of this hemisphere. But, until such a basis is established, that doctrine, tacitly recognized by certain European powers as it has been, should not be thrown away. In the meantime, it can be given a new dignity by being invoked, if necessary, in the name of future peace and good will, to insure to Mexico the right of settling her difficulties without interference either American or European.